

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 3 and 13 are canceled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 1, 2, 4-12, 14-22 are pending. Claims 1, 7, 11, and 17 are amended, and claims 21 and 22 are added. Claims 1, 11, and 21 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 3, 4, 7-10, 13, 14, and 17-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. In response,

independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 3,

independent claim 11 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected- to claim 13, and

independent claim 21 is added to combine the subject matter of independent claim 1 (as originally filed) and the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 9.

Accordingly, independent claims 1, 11, and 21 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicants' claim for foreign priority.

Drawings

It is gratefully appreciated that the Examiner has accepted the drawings.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 1-2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Nawa et al. (U.S. 2001/0023685);

claims 1-2 and 11-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hori et al. (U.S. 6,192,865); and

claims 1-2, 5-6, 11-12 and 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Tahara et al. (U.S. 6,223,727).

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As mentioned above, and while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 3, independent claim 11 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 13, and independent claim 21 is added to combine the subject matter of independent claim 1 (as originally filed) and the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 9.

Accordingly, independent claims 1, 11, and 21 are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 3 and 13 are now canceled, and dependent claim 22 (corresponding to original dependent claim 10) is added depending from added independent claim 21.

All pending dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependence on allowable independent claims.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

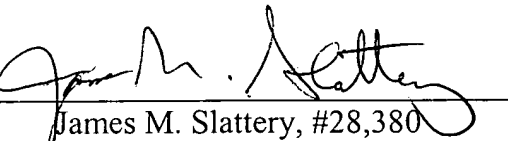
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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